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**TITLE:**  
U.S. JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES:  
TOO FEW, OVERWORKED, YOUNG, HOMOGENOUS, & MACHO TO FULFILL  
THE UNCONVENTIONAL DEMANDS OF THE LONG WAR?

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF OPERATIONAL STUDIES

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## *Preface*

My interest in counter-insurgency warfare principally stemmed from personal experiences as a Marine infantry officer and reconnaissance company commander in Iraq from August 2004 until April 2005. During that period, my parent unit, 2d Reconnaissance Battalion, was assigned an area of operations approximately 1,200 square kilometers due south of the city of Fallujah in the rural area of Zaidon in the Al Anbar Province. Our battalion, numbering fewer than 300 men, was assigned the seemingly insurmountable task of “pacifying” a hostile area whose populace generally resented our presence and actively, or at least passively, supported the Sunni and foreign insurgents who fought us.

Ours was, ultimately, a supporting, “economy of force” role. My battalion and company assisted other coalition forces who focused upon eliminating the insurgent presence within the urban warrens of Fallujah. During OPERATION PHANTOM FURY (also known as OPERATION AL FAJR), which commenced in November 2004, our unit was charged with the responsibility of blocking insurgent infiltration and exfiltration from the city along known enemy “rat lines.” I believe that we were mostly successful in accomplishing our goal of isolating the city from the south.

Nonetheless, even after the physical elimination of many of the insurgents within Fallujah, problems within the Zaidon persisted. Company units continued to be the targets of nearly daily mortar, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and occasional suicide vehicle-borne IED (SVBIED) attacks. It appeared to many of us that we confronted a seemingly intractable problem that could not be solved through “kinetic” solutions. Fundamentally, we realized that we could not garner even the passive

cooperation of the local populace, let alone win their “hearts and minds,” by simply targeting and killing all who opposed us.

In the subsequent months after Fallujah had been retaken, our battalion continued to operate with only limited success. Although we effectively dismantled or eliminated several insurgent networks, our achievements appeared to be only ephemeral. In truth, we confronted an immeasurably complex environment for which we were not totally prepared. Lacking linguistic skills, cultural expertise, and political acumen, we often fumbled in our attempts to understand the human terrain and popular grievances. Countless questions arose: Who were the “power players” in our zone?; what motivated them to support the insurgency or coalition forces?; how could we convince them to collaborate, or at least, accept our presence and not interfere with our operations?; how did our actions or inactions influence the operational environment?; how could we overcome the Iraqis’ natural opposition to “foreign or neo-colonial” occupation as we endeavored to satisfy their needs, while simultaneously accomplishing our own objectives?; and ultimately, how could I protect my men to the greatest degree possible while still accomplishing our assigned missions?

As we collectively faced these challenges, I came to the frustrating conclusion that we were only seven-month dilettantes, inserted into an environment that we barely understood. Nonetheless, certain individuals, who by disposition and/or maturity, soon proved themselves better prepared at embracing and excelling within the inherent ambiguities of counter-insurgency (COIN) warfare.

Throughout the deployment, I relied upon my reconnaissance team leaders to provide accurate combat information on local “atmospherics.” The best of these

extraordinary men repeatedly demonstrated their capacity to accurately ascertain and generate “actionable” intelligence by developing a rapport and earning the trust of the public and local informants. The company’s exceptional reconnaissance team leaders shared common traits: superior intelligence, a willingness to learn, and most importantly, an empathetic understanding of the Iraqis’ needs.

These select individuals reminded me of outstanding U.S. Army Special Forces (SF) personnel with whom I had served in Iraq and in previous missions in South America. I came to the realization that the best of these recon men and SF soldiers were truly unique, or special. I considered them the key leaders and “force-multipliers,” who could facilitate America’s success in COIN operations. These unsung heroes earned my abiding admiration.

Therefore, I decided to focus my research and analysis upon producing a future warfare paper that would evaluate the efficacy of current and projected United States Special Operations Command’s (USSOCOM’s) efforts to recruit, select, train, and employ the men and women, who specialize in the “indirect” approaches of counter-insurgency warfare. Motivated by the direction and encouragement of Colonel Anthony Abati, an SF veteran and the Special Operations Chair of the Marine Corps University, I commenced this study in the hopes of learning about Joint Special Operations Forces (JSOF) of the present and projected future. My interest in this subject was further piqued by the introduction and incorporation of Marine Special Operations Forces (MARSOFF) within USSOCOM in 2006. Ultimately, I hoped to analyze the writings of disparate critics of USSOCOM’s performance in the “Long War” in the hopes of synthesizing this information to proffer modest suggestions on how USSOCOM could improve its future

performance. The reader will judge whether, even moderately, I have succeeded in this task.

In the process of writing this paper, numerous individuals offered invaluable assistance. With my deepest gratitude, I would like to recognize a few of them. Mr. Dennis P. Kilcullen, Deputy Director of Strategic Studies at the Joint Special Operations University, was kind enough to guide me through USSOCOM's bureaucracy as he introduced me to numerous personnel during my two-day research visit at USSOCOM headquarters in Florida. Another SF veteran, he demonstrated uncommon courtesy and graciousness as he answered my endless questions about special operations.

Lieutenant Colonel Scott M. Curtin, USAF, USSOCOM Future Concept Planner, generously shared his time and resources to prepare this paper. I am also indebted to Mr. Alex Findley and Mr. Patrick M. Robey, research analysts with Booz, Allen, and Hamilton; Mr. Will Irwin, Senior Operations Analyst and Operations and Special Support with Titan Group; Mr. Kenneth H. Poole, Senior Fellow, Joint Special Operations University; and Lieutenant Colonel Sean P. Feeley, USA, Chief, Policy, Plans, and Operations and Intelligence, Irregular Warfare Directorate.

I am particularly grateful to Sergeant Major David B. Betz, USA, Senior Enlisted Advisor, USSOCOM, for sharing his insightful comments and opinions on the current state of SF during an hour-long interview. Sergeant Major Betz impressed me as an exceptionally intelligent and forthright veteran who clearly understood the challenges that SF confronted in the future.



Additionally, I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Ray Johnson, a professor at the U.S. Marine Corps School of Advance Warfighting, who read the first draft of this paper and provided meaningful feedback to improve it.

Dr. Paolo Tripodi, the D. Bren Chair of Ethics and Leadership of the Marine Corps University, served as my civilian faculty advisor on this thesis. He exhibited extraordinary patience and provided constant encouragement while I labored to complete this paper. His meticulous reviews of my drafts and critical comments helped me to focus my thesis and strengthen its arguments.

Colonel Anthony Abati served as my primary military faculty mentor until he departed for an assignment as a senior military advisor of Iraqi military forces in April 2008. During my two years as a student at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College and School of Advanced Warfighting, he exerted, by far, the most profound impact upon my educational experience. He helped me to look beyond my service parochialism and appreciate the paramount importance of inter-service and agency cooperation in the U.S.'s collective fight in the Long War. Most importantly, he imparted to me the fundamental necessity of maintaining one's receptiveness to others' ideas.

Lastly, it is with profound respect and love that I dedicate this earnest, albeit flawed, study to my two beloved sisters, Wendy and Heidi, who have always proven unfailingly supportive of their incorrigible "little bro."

## *Executive Summary*

**Title:** U.S. Joint Special Operations Forces: Too Few, Overworked, Young, Homogenous, & Macho to Fulfill the Unconventional Demands of the Long War?

**Author:** Major Kevin H Hutchison, United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** USSOCOM should promote indirect approaches and strengthen its unconventional capabilities in order to maximize the utility of JSOF in the Long War.

**Discussion:** The United States currently finds itself engaged in a prolonged conflict against global insurgency, commonly recognized as the “Long War.” Regrettably, many American leaders continue to misunderstand its nature, and consequently, they have arguably not applied the best methods to combat it. The U.S. military, in particular, has resisted reform to meet the demands of a war perpetuated by non-state actors due to its predisposition towards confronting and defeating other countries in conventional warfare. As a result, it has not employed its resources and personnel, particularly its Joint Special Operations Forces (JSOF), many of whom specialize in counter-insurgency warfare, in the most effective manner. United States Special Operations Command’s (USSOCOM) similar fixation on strike warfare has come at the expense of fully developing and maintaining its unconventional capacity to carryout indirect approaches, which strive to undermine opponents through proxies. These indirect approaches have historically proven to be one of the most efficient means to defeat insurgencies. These unconventional skill sets are arguably the most distinguishing and “special” characteristic of JSOF because they cannot be replicated by conventional forces. USSOCOM’s continued emphasis on strike warfare and “hard” or “warrior” skills, and its extolment of exceptional physical and mental toughness over “soft” skills of persuasion and diplomacy, have resulted in a force that is more elite than genuinely special. Hence, USSOCOM currently selects, trains, and employs many personnel whose capabilities can only be differentiated from those of general-purpose forces by a matter of degree, not kind. Due to improved training and technology, general-purpose forces are capable of carrying out many of the direct missions that JSOF undertakes; consequently, the overall value of USSOCOM’s participation in direct missions has diminished. This study will argue, therefore, that USSOCOM needs to reestablish the primacy of its indirect missions, and fully support the forces who execute them.

**Conclusion:** A comprehensive analysis of USSOCOM’s current methods for screening, selecting, training, and employing JSOF reveals that USSOCOM has by design (and default) created a force that is primed for commando raids, but less prepared for indirect operations through surrogates. Current JSOF personnel, and Army SF in particular, are too few, overworked, young, homogenous, and ultimately, too predisposed towards strike warfare to provide their greatest potential contribution to winning the Long War—their special unconventional skills. This study offers several suggestions on how USSOCOM can ameliorate these problems in order to better prepare and employ JSOF of the future.

***Introduction: USSOCOM's Central Role in the Long War***

“[Counter-insurgency warfare] requires more brain than brawn, more patience than aggression. The model soldier should be less science-fiction Terminator and more intellectual for the ‘graduate level of war,’ preferably a linguist, with a sense of history and anthropology.”<sup>1</sup>

The United States currently finds itself engaged in a prolonged conflict against global terrorism and insurgencies commonly recognized as the “Long War.”<sup>2</sup> The Long War presents the U.S. and its allies with many unique, although not entirely unprecedented, challenges and opportunities. It is essentially a war against trans-national, non-state actors, who persist and perpetuate violence primarily through the support of traditional social and tribal networks, and to a lesser degree, the active and passive sponsorship of rival nation-states. Regrettably, many U.S. political and military leaders continue to misunderstand its nature, and consequently, they have arguably not applied the best methods to combat it. American leaders still struggle to marshal and employ the combined elements of national power in concert to defeat enemies whose principal source of strength often depends on familial ties, shared religious beliefs, and common ethnicity.

Thus far, the U.S. military’s predilection towards conventional operations and “direct” methods, which emphasize U.S.-led offensive strikes, firepower, and technology to eliminate enemies, has achieved only limited success. After seven years of continuous fighting, the U.S. appears no closer to winning the Long War. This fact underscores the reality that although the fight against global terrorism is an important component of the Long War, it is not the most important one. Rather, the struggle to eliminate localized

and trans-national insurgencies, which are rarely defeated solely through direct military methods, remains the primary challenge.

The U.S. military's fixation on direct approaches has come at the expense of fully developing and maintaining an unconventional capability to carryout "indirect" approaches, which strive to undermine opponents through proxies (See Appendices A & C.) As a result, the U.S. military has not employed its resources and personnel, particularly its Joint Special Operations Forces (JSOF), many of whom specialize in counter-insurgency warfare, in the most judicious manner. Indirect approaches, when coordinated with political, social, and economic efforts, have historically proven to be the most effective method towards defeating insurgencies.

Partly in recognition of its expertise in counter-terrorism (CT) operations, USSOCOM has been appointed as the unified command to lead, plan, synchronize and, as directed, execute global operations against terrorist networks.<sup>3</sup> This responsibility is considerable. On account of this strategic directive and its own penchant towards strike warfare, USSOCOM has become too preoccupied with relatively unproductive direct missions (primarily in support of conventional operations and forces) against terrorist cells instead of focusing upon counter-insurgency operations. Considering the *comparative paucity* of its resources, equipment and, most importantly, *highly skilled manpower*, it is readily apparent that JSOF's strategic value in the Long War has been undermined.

JSOF's potential remains unrealized because their efforts have not been focused primarily on missions that conventional forces cannot perform, or at least not at acceptable risks and costs, in "hostile, denied, and politically sensitive areas."<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, JSOF's indirect capabilities have not been fully leveraged in the Long War. These unconventional skill sets are arguably the most distinguishing, and hence special characteristic of JSOF because they cannot be replicated or easily replaced by conventional forces.

USSOCOM's emphasis on strike warfare has resulted in a force that is predominantly more elite than special. It currently selects, trains, and employs many personnel whose capabilities can be differentiated from those of general-purpose forces by a matter of degree, not kind.<sup>5</sup> Even Army SF, who historically specialize in unconventional warfare (UW) and foreign internal defense (FID), are increasingly being employed in direct missions like their JSOF brethren such as the Rangers, SEALs, and other classified commando units (See Appendix A.) While their fundamental infantry skills undoubtedly surpass those of their conventional counterparts, JSOF rarely exercise truly unique or special capabilities in most direct missions. Due to improved training and technology, general-purpose forces are capable of carrying out many of the direct missions that JSOF currently undertakes; therefore, the overall value of USSOCOM's participation in direct missions has diminished. For this reason alone, USSOCOM should promote and strengthen its unconventional capabilities in order to maximize the utility of JSOF in the Long War.

This paper will attempt to explain the historical foundations for USSOCOM's reluctance to emphasize indirect missions. It will also examine how USSOCOM's current methods for screening, selecting, training, and employing JSOF have created by design (and default) a force that is primed for commando raids, but less prepared for indirect operations through surrogates. I will focus my analysis primarily upon Army SF

because it has the most extensive experiential base in FID and UW. Within USSOCOM, SF has by far the widest array of missions; however, as David Tucker and Christopher Lamb duly emphasize, what is truly special about them is their capability to bring force to bear indirectly.<sup>6</sup> *Current JSOF personnel, and SF in particular, are too few, overworked, young, homogenous, and ultimately, too predisposed towards strike warfare to provide their greatest potential contribution to winning the Long War- their special unconventional skills.*

I will conclude by offering several suggestions on how USSOCOM can ameliorate these problems in hopes of prompting further analysis and action towards preparing JSOF of the future. I will suggest that USSOCOM shift its attitude and orientation to better support indirect methods and the personnel who execute them. Additionally, I will propose that USSOCOM consider creating two co-equal subordinate commands, which would focus on direct and indirect missions respectively. This study will also provide several recommendations on how USSOCOM should consider amending its manpower policies in order to maximize the utility of its UW/FID operators. I will also put forward several ideas on how UW/FID teams should be restructured in the future to ensure greater flexibility and versatility. Lastly, I will recommend that USSOCOM consider the recruitment of select foreigners within its ranks in order to leverage their cultural expertise and language skills.

### ***The Nature of the Long War***

The fundamental problem has been to face up to the true nature and extent of the Long War. . . It is a conflict precipitated by the slow collapse of the *ancien régime*: the monarchs, autocrats, outright tyrants, and petty dictators whose legitimacy is gradually but inexorably being eroded.<sup>7</sup>

The reasons for the U.S. military's lack of preparedness for conducting an effective global counter-insurgency strategy are multifold. Traditional American military strengths have lain in firepower and technological superiority. Based upon these strong points, the U.S. military has been naturally inclined to apply direct methods to achieve victory. However, the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have demonstrated that while the U.S. Armed Forces have proven quite capable in destroying targets, they have not achieved the same success in rebuilding states. Their overreliance upon firepower has often proven to be counter-productive.

Furthermore, America's technological superiority has proved of little use against the tactics and weapons employed by elusive, unconventional opponents. Contrary to pre-9/11 predictions, U.S. forces have not confronted an era of futuristic combat against near-peer opponents. Instead, American servicemen have been slogging it out in a succession of protracted ground wars against opponents who have arisen in the wake of failed central authority, and who rely upon traditional social and tribal networks.<sup>8</sup> Thomas Donnelly rightfully noted that, "The Rumsfeld 'transformation' project, premised on the assumption that victory would be secured by the precise application of firepower, has collapsed."<sup>9</sup>

America's enemies have found an unexpected combination of sophisticated, and at the same time, primitive courses of action to counter the U.S. military's technological advantages. For example, insurgent groups have readily exploited the internet to develop computer network attack capabilities, advertise exploits to prospective recruits, and disseminate intelligence. American scientific innovations have only partially mitigated the threats of pervasive and uncomplicated weapons such as improvised explosive

devices (IEDs). Efforts to jam IEDs' initiation devices, for example, have compelled many insurgents to use simple, command-detonated triggers. Likewise, Iraqi insurgents, aware of the U.S. military's ability to exploit their telecommunications, often rely upon foot messengers or even carrier pigeons to share information. According to Martin Creveld, "Technology is not playing any greater role in shaping warfare [and hence the Long War] than it has done at any time in the past. To say so is a form of hubris that is not without importance to the American way of making war in particular."<sup>10</sup> In the void created by the collapse of many failed nation-states, traditional social and tribal structures have naturally reemerged. Adversaries have often found sanctuary within these "primitive structures" and exploited their xenophobic natures to create natural bulwarks against American technological penetration and direct approaches.

### *Adapting to the Realities of the Long War*

The significant firepower and technological dominance of the United States have not translated into an equal proficiency in combating insurgencies. Through planning failures and its natural disinclination to become involved in protracted counter-insurgencies that offer no clear-cut victories and risk the prospect of humiliation, the U.S. military finds itself struggling to adapt.<sup>11</sup> A *New York Times* editorial argued that, "Before Iraq, Pentagon dogma- - supported by most Republican politicians and many conservative Democrats- - held that United States troops were 'war fighters.' Peacekeeping and nation-building [which rely upon indirect military approaches in



conjunction with political, economic, social initiatives] were jobs for ‘Old Europe.’ Well, that was then.”<sup>12</sup>

*The gravest mistake that the current U.S. administration and Department of Defense (DOD) have committed is to misidentify the current struggle as a war predominantly against global terrorism, and not, as it is actually, a war primarily against localized and trans-national insurgencies.* The former favors kinetic responses, as most terrorist groups who commit extensive, indiscriminate campaigns of terror, rarely pursue or enjoy widespread popular support. They employ terror as a logic instead of as a method (one tool among many) to achieve their political objectives.<sup>13</sup> Hence, if the terrorist cells are targeted and eliminated, their movements often die as well.

In contrast, insurgents rely upon popular support, and thus by necessity, they will moderate their use of indiscriminate violence in order to avoid losing their base. Accordingly, counter-insurgency warfare must logically focus upon addressing the popular grievances that fuel insurgencies. Most insurgencies cannot be defeated through direct approaches. Insurgent leaders may be killed, but if popular grievances persist, the insurgent movements will most likely survive. Considering the fact that U.S. military forces have killed a considerable number of “terrorist” leaders, yet still remain mired in Iraq and Afghanistan, underscores this fact. Favored direct approaches have only moderately satisfied operational and strategic objectives. Hence, they should no longer remain USSOCOM’s primary focus.

Instead of addressing the root causes of insurgencies, the *U.S. has mistakenly attempted to kill its way to victory.* Consequently, it has focused upon technological, destructive solutions instead of opting for constructive, armed social work that empowers

foreign governments to develop their organic capacity to meet the demands of their populations.

As a result of the U.S.'s misguided strategy, the Long War appears to be a conflict that presently offers no foreseeable and satisfying end. It challenges the U.S. with the quandary of fighting a type of war that it does not desire and is ill-prepared for, but cannot avoid. The risk of losing in Iraq and Afghanistan is acute. In the end, "if the greatest challenge is the fight against militants and insurgents around the world [in the near future], then the [U.S. military] will need more boots on the ground and, crucially, different sorts of soldiers wearing them."<sup>14</sup> *In order to win the Long War, it is evident that the U.S. must invest more money and resources into recruiting, screening, training, and employing uniquely talented personnel who will specialize in COIN operations..*

***Direct Versus Indirect Approaches: Which Should Take Precedence?***

When it comes to selecting and training to shoot to kill, JSOF establish the state of the art. When it comes to selecting and training for cultural sensitivity, it does not. For example, no one in JSOF spends enough time learning languages and cultures comparable to the time SEALs spend learning to shoot. What should we make of this?<sup>15</sup>

Historically, the arguments in favor of indirect approaches are compelling. They are potentially very efficient considering that a few UW experts have the potential to train and employ large numbers of indigenous forces. For example, SF have accomplished extraordinary successes in relation to their numbers combating insurgencies in Colombia, Horn of Africa, and the Philippines. Max Boot cited the example of El Salvador in the 1980s, "When you had fewer than a few hundred Special Forces advisers, and you can argue that they achieved more than half a million troops in Vietnam."<sup>16</sup> FID missions, in

particular, can prove very effective in building a host nation's capacity to establish security and enforce the rule of law. Once it can provide adequate protection for its own citizens, the host nation government will most likely garner further support and be better positioned to address popular grievances.

Indirect methods are also inherently lower profile, and thus, often involve less political and military risk than direct approaches. Since UW exerts influence via proxies, if UW efforts fail, they can be more easily denied or disavowed. Indirect approaches can minimize proxies' resentment of foreign intrusion as well since they endeavor to build a host nation's self-capacity. FID/UW experts are generally careful not to claim credit openly for their proxies' successes. In this manner, they reinforce host nations' sovereignty while preserving their surrogates' self-respect.

Another advantage of indirect missions is that they are very effective in developing actionable intelligence on enemy networks and activities due to their persistent nature. UW and FID experts spend prolonged periods of time with indigenous forces. This exposure allows them to unravel and understand local cultures. In particular, as indirect operators learn how their opponents operate and communicate within their insular societies, the insurgents' security advantages are somewhat negated. With increased knowledge of these traditional, non-state networks, JSOF can more readily penetrate and influence them.

Most importantly, *indirect methods achieve more enduring results than direct ones* because they focus upon building surrogates' capacity. If indirect efforts are successful, their lasting effects will persist long after American military personnel have departed. Even if they fail, they still can retard the onset of defeat. For example, SF

soldiers involved in the U.S. Army Vietnam Individual Training Group (UITG) and Marines in the Combined Action Program (CAP) achieved remarkable successes in training indigenous forces as unconventional and conventional forces, who in turn effectively held off both the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Vietcong for several years.<sup>17</sup>

Yet in light of indirect approaches' many and enduring advantages, USSOCOM persists in its preference towards direct missions in the Long War. There are several reasons to explain this predilection. Direct missions offer the promise of immediate, tangible results. Little intellectual effort is required to acknowledge the instantaneous, yet often only short-term, benefits of successful DA missions. They offer the promise of efficiently killing principal terrorist and insurgent leaders. Successful decapitation strikes against terrorist and insurgent cells also satisfy military and political leaders, as well as the public at large. They bolster commanders, units, service components, and USSOCOM's prestige and reputation. Recognition of USSOCOM's achievements in the capture or elimination of high-profile targets validates investments made in JSOF, ensuring the continuance of congressional support.

DA and CT operations are also far more straightforward and debatably less demanding than the complexity and ambiguity endemic to UW and FID. They grant U.S. military forces greater control since they frequently require only limited coordination, and rely less upon surrogates whose capabilities and motives may be suspect. The establishment of mutually beneficial relationships between the U.S. military and proxies with disparate cultures, outlooks, and often conflicting agendas will always prove complicated and challenging.

Furthermore, strike forces do not necessarily require extensive cultural and language training, areas of expertise that traditionally prove more troublesome for many to master. The level of training and proficiency of USSOCOM's commandos, particularly within its Special Mission Units (SMUs), are unquestionably extraordinary. However, it could be argued that it is far more difficult to train and retain an expert in FID and UW (e.g., an SF Team Sergeant) than it is to train an SMU assault member.

Direct missions are also far more appealing and exhilarating for many JSOF professionals than the often frustrating drudgery of working "through, with, and by" indigenous forces and foreign militaries. Many JSOF personnel naturally find it more satisfying to exercise their "hard" skills than to dedicate onerous years perfecting "soft" skills of persuasion and diplomacy. Understandably, many eschew learning difficult foreign languages, repeatedly deploying to austere environments for prolonged periods, and training often recalcitrant foreign "allies" with suspect loyalties. Ostensibly, the former prospect promises more stimulation and possibly less frustration than the latter.

FID and UW missions clearly require a more mature and extensively trained soldier, sailor, airman, or Marine. In recognition of the complexity of indirect missions, SF has traditionally only recruited relatively senior enlisted personnel and seasoned Captains. However, due to overwhelming operational demands, USSOCOM has been obligated to recruit an ever-younger force. The current inventory of SF soldiers with one to five years of overall military experience is markedly above authorization. In contrast, there exists a pronounced shortfall of SF soldiers with fourteen to twenty years of experience.<sup>18</sup> The "greening" of JSOF naturally undermines USSOCOM's ability to

carryout indirect missions.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, USSOCOM's predisposition towards strike warfare has only increased because JSOF forces have become less capable of carrying out indirect missions.

DA missions also require less time. Once actionable intelligence is obtained, strike packages can be executed in a relatively short period of time. In contrast, the benefits of UW and FID may require efforts that take years to bear fruit, and are not immediately, if ever, discernible. Surrogates, moreover, rarely perform exactly as desired. They often employ "questionable" methods that violate American laws and morality.<sup>20</sup> The negative repercussions of U.S. association with individuals who commit human rights violations are potentially very damaging.

Few senior commanders in USSOCOM have extensive experience in indirect methods. Generals such as Doug Brown and Dell Dailey, USSOCOM's former Commanding General and Operations Center Director, respectively, "cut their professional teeth. . . on direct action, or commando-style raids."<sup>21</sup> Naturally, these leaders have a tendency to focus upon what they know best.

DA and CT operations are intrinsically limited in what they can achieve. In spite of enormous efforts, for example, the U.S. and its allies still have not captured or killed many key enemy leaders. Finding a single individual intent on hiding has turned out to be extremely difficult, even for a superpower.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, even if one successfully eliminates all or even some of a movement's charismatic leaders, others often arise to take their place. The "flattened" horizontal, hierarchical structure of many modern insurgency groups ensures that the destruction of putative leadership cells will not

necessarily result in the elimination of these movements. Many insurgent leaders merely exert “virtual” leadership through inspiration rather than actual “hands-on” direction.

DA is also inherently risky. Although it emphasizes precise kinetic solutions, it may also cause unintentional collateral damage and kill innocent bystanders, thereby alienating people whom the U.S. is trying to protect. DA mistakes may prompt “fence sitters” to turn against American forces and offer vital support to enemies. Perhaps most significantly, direct missions may also undermine the legitimacy and sovereignty of foreign governments whose favor the U.S. strives to maintain in the Long War. In the eyes of foreign populations, the abrupt and violent intrusion of American military forces may underscore the weaknesses and incapacities of their own governments.

However, in spite of the limitations of DA missions, they must continue to play an important, if not the most crucial role, in the Long War strategy. General Brown convincingly argued that, “Direct action buys time for the indirect approach to work while defending the homeland and keeping our adversaries off balance, so that we can enable nations to deal with and erode the support of terrorists.”<sup>23</sup> Successful DA missions undeniably facilitate information during sensitive site exploitation (SSE) activities, providing invaluable insight into the structures of insurgent and terrorist groups. DA can expose enemy vulnerabilities and lead to further direct and indirect operations.

However, the converse is true as well; successful indirect efforts contribute to the execution of successful direct missions. For example, the cultural knowledge garnered from working with indigenous forces positively contributes to the identification of potential targets. DA and UW/ FID clearly complement one another. Nonetheless,

*indirect approaches should take precedence in the Long War because of their greater efficiency and potential to achieve enduring results.*

Ultimately, there is a pressing need to establish a long-term, sensible equilibrium between the indirect approaches of intelligence gathering, UW, FID, psychological operations (PSYOP), civil affairs (CA), and the direct approaches of short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions (See Appendix C). DA/CT and FID/ UW are clearly resource-competing missions. USSOCOM's insistence upon a predominantly DA approach has ensured that fewer JSOF are available for indirect missions. This imbalance must be addressed.

***What Type of JSOF Warrior Does USSOCOM Currently Produce?  
What is the Problem?***

“We’re just a bunch of white guys, going into old buildings, using old tactics, doing old things. . .” – Lament of a senior SF SNCO expressed during a private interview with the author.

Commendably, USSOCOM is actively seeking solutions to remodel itself.

USSOCOM is looking beyond the immediate conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan . . . . Simply killing terrorists and repeatedly disrupting an ever-changing network posts a perpetual challenge and ultimately will not win the War. . . . Special Operations Forces’ key role in the long-term fight will be conducting UW and FID to build foreign capabilities that deny terrorist organizations the ability to sustain their efforts.<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, USSOCOM's reform efforts have proven to be too inconsistent and inadequate thus far to accomplish the above-mentioned goal. Current JSOF candidates are not being properly recruited, screened, trained, employed, and supported to best tackle the present and future challenges they are likely to face. The challenges that USSOCOM confronts remain daunting. JSOF require a long lead-time to be fielded



effectively. Moreover, JSOF cannot be quickly replaced/ reconstituted, nor can their capabilities be rapidly expanded.

The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) called for a 15% increase in JSOF beginning in FY2007. There has been concern expressed that this expansion might not be achievable, and could result in a lower-quality force.<sup>25</sup> According to Andrew Feickert, “Concerns have been raised that a rapid expansion [of JSOF] will result in a force that ‘while bigger on paper, will contain half-filled units manned by troops who are less mature, less experienced, and less skilled in languages and foreign cultures than SF soldiers traditionally have been.’”<sup>26</sup>

In the last decade *JSOF’s average age has lowered significantly*. The “greening of the force” presents several challenges to the efficacy of SOF. Although youth and physical vigor are often beneficial for DA, CT, and Special Reconnaissance (SR) missions, often they are not a vital asset in UW/FID missions. Younger operators naturally tend to be less experienced and mature.

In addition, *USSOCOM has struggled to retain its most experienced operators* due to overwhelming operational tempo, limited monetary and educational incentives to remain in uniform, and lucrative civilian opportunities. *JSOF are strained by the most vigorous deployment schedule in their 45-year history*. Nearly 90% of JSOF deployments are focused in the Middle East, leaving other volatile areas unchecked.<sup>27</sup> Symptoms of a slowly breaking force are already evident throughout the ranks: troop exhaustion, the exodus of promising young officers and experienced non-commissioned officers, worn-out equipment, and a decline in overall readiness for the next conflict.<sup>28</sup> Private security firms such as Blackwater USA and Triple Canopy compound

USSOCOM's personnel shortfalls by luring JSOF operators with high-paying security contracts that are considerably more lucrative than their relatively modest military compensation.

*JSOF effectiveness is also hampered by its lack of racial and ethnic diversity.*

The current composition of JSOF is overwhelmingly Caucasian and lower-middle class. The number of minorities, particularly blacks, within JSOF is particularly low when compared to their percentages throughout the conventional forces.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, JSOF and other elite formations within the DOD such as the Marine Corps, have evolved into semi-caste societies in which military service has become a familial tradition. As a result, JSOF have become even more homogenized and less diverse.

The detriments of this homogenization are multifold. JSOF's failure to reflect socially, racially, and ethnically the multi-cultural, democratic society that they represent and defend may result in further alienation between the two and exacerbate current tensions in civic-military relations. Homogeneity within JSOF also discourages minority recruitment. Minorities have become more disinclined to join JSOF since they do not see many examples of their own within their ranks. More importantly, multiple perceived barriers to minority inclusion within JSOF have resulted in a force that lacks the range of disparate life experiences and perspectives that could prove valuable when dealing with foreigners.<sup>30</sup>

However, the last point should not be overstated. There is no automatic cultural affinity between peoples who share similar ethnic backgrounds, but who grew up in different countries.<sup>31</sup> That is to say, for example, that a Chicano raised in Texas is not necessarily better positioned to understand Colombians than a white from Minnesota or a

black from New Jersey. From a purely military standpoint, the recruitment of minorities within USSOCOM needs to be focused on select individuals who share an affinity and understanding of target populations abroad. Logically, the recruitment of an Iraqi immigrant would probably prove more valuable as a potential JSOF warrior in the Long War than a second-generation Tahitian-American. USSOCOM should not only strive to recruit more minorities, but more importantly, it *must endeavor to recruit the “right” ones.*

Moreover, *physical standards for USSOCOM’s FID/UW candidates remain arguably too high.* Excruciating physical requirements inherent in JSOF selections eliminate too many candidates who possess rare and desirable cultural, psychological, and intellectual attributes. For example, attrition rates in U.S. Army Special Forces Assessment Selection (SFAS) routinely run near 70%. SFAS requires candidates to orient over rough terrain and move incredible distances while carrying heavy loads. SFAS also incorporates extensive mental and psychological tests. Many candidates who fail SFAS do so because they voluntarily quit under the tremendous physical strains placed upon them. Yet physical prowess and professional competency alone clearly do not determine an individual’s suitability for JSOF’s indirect missions.<sup>32</sup>

While there certainly is a correlation between physical and mental endurance (e.g., many of the JSOF units’ assessment criteria are justly based upon evaluating a candidate’s ability “not to quit,” as well as his/ her fundamental physical performance), *one could justifiably argue that within the context of most FID/ UW operations, exceptional physical fitness is not a priority.* Current selection processes, which demand extraordinary physical preparation and strength, lean predominantly towards

screening and selecting ideal JSOF candidates for elite-conventional operations. DA, CT, and SR missions consistently demand tremendous physical and mental endurance; however, most of them can still be carried out by exceptionally trained conventional forces.

Historically, psychological stability, initiative, independence, and creativity have proven to be far more effective indicators in predicting operatives' success in "hostile, denied, and politically sensitive areas." During World War II, Office of Strategic Services (OSS) agents who proved most capable tended to share common traits. (While OSS agents, and their modern CIA decedents, were and continue to be tasked to carry out distinct missions under different legal parameters than JSOF operators, the skill sets needed for both are similar.) First, OSS agents demonstrated above-average intelligence and intellectual curiosity. Many candidates, including enlisted personnel, possessed at least some college education and knowledge of foreign languages. Other desirable personality traits included a propensity to work well in teams, consistency, enthusiasm, mental endurance, and an innate ability to communicate non-verbally. "The OSS was not an organization into which an insecure, dependent, unresourceful, or rigidly methodical individual could easily fit."<sup>33</sup> Operatives were expected to live on their own wits, often relentlessly hunted down by the Gestapo. Interestingly, OSS screening placed only secondary importance on a candidate's physical abilities.

Current and future FID/UW missions will continue to require truly unique individuals who do not fit, and may in fact contradict, the mold of stereotypical commandos. USSOCOM will require future operators who possess more of a constructive mentality than a destructive one. Essentially, they must be discriminatory

humanitarian warriors who instinctively understand that in counter-insurgency warfare kinetic solutions are often counter-productive. They must be individuals who can tolerate ambiguity, adapt to the unexpected, and possess the ability to persuade others.<sup>34</sup>

By necessity, the FID/UW warriors of tomorrow will need to be different from today's typical, all-male SF Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) twelve-member team. For example, future ODAs will need to be more diverse in appearance and expertise in order to facilitate operations behind enemy lines. Groups of highly-fit males, uniformly aged, predominantly Caucasian, with limited language abilities and often only a perfunctory cultural understanding of the regions in which they operate, are stymied in their ability to operate effectively, let alone clandestinely, in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa. Even when dressed in local mufti with de rigueur beards, their presence is conspicuous to say the least, and their capacity for information/ intelligence collection is naturally limited.

### ***Suggestions to Improve USSOCOM's FID/ UW Capability***

When the Army created an official pedigree for SF in 1960, it traced its roots to such units such as Roger's Rangers, the First Special Service Force, and other elite raiding organizations, which had little or no connection to working with indigenous forces, rather than to the OSS, which did.<sup>35</sup>

A fundamental attitude shift within USSOCOM needs to occur in order to ensure that indirect approaches, and the personnel who carry them out, are valued as much as direct approaches and the CT/DA operators. USSOCOM should embrace its unconventional heritage as much as it cherishes its commando traditions. Both played a fundamental role in USSOCOM's founding. Moreover, the extolment of "hard" skills

over “soft” ones should be discontinued. Both are equally necessary in the Long War. The classification of traditional infantry skills and direct methods as “hard” and persuasive and indirect skills as “soft” implies the former are more becoming of a true “warrior.” This is simply erroneous. JSOF warriors of the future will need social skills and intellect even as much, if not more, than physical and mental toughness. Therefore, it is suggested that the continued categorization of these skills and approaches as “hard” or “soft” be discouraged. Rather, they should be formally designated as either direct or indirect skills in order to lessen prejudicial perceptions against the latter.

USSOCOM should also strive to create a world-class, well-resourced unconventional capability. In order to accomplish this goal, the bifurcation of USSOCOM into subordinate direct and indirect commands should be considered. Academics and military analysts such as David Tucker, Christopher Lamb, and Max Boot have recommended that USSOCOM create a new “Indirect Approaches (IA) or Joint FID/UW Command” that would be placed on equal footing with a “Direct Approaches or Joint Strike Command.” The Joint IA Command would logically be led by experienced UW and FID general officers, who in turn could exert greater influence throughout USSOCOM and ensure that indirect missions receive the attention, resources, and personnel that they plainly warrant.

Based upon their extensive experience in FID/UW, it would be logical to appoint SF general officers to lead this command. Other forces that specialize in indirect approaches (e.g. PSYOP and CA) should also fall under this command. The incorporation of MARSOF into the IA Command should be considered as well. Currently, MARSOF is divided between the Foreign Military Training Unit, which

specializes in FID/UW, and two Marine Special Operations Battalions, which focus on SR and DA. An evaluation of whether this division of MARSOF provides USSOCOM the greatest benefit should be conducted. Considering the critical scarcity of FID/UW operators within USSOCOM, the conversion of all, or at least a portion, of MARSOF personnel to the FMTU may be an option. If this conversion is determined to be undesirable, then FMTU personnel should at least serve under the IA command while MARSOF units should fall underneath the Strike Command. FMTU Marines would benefit immensely by learning from and supporting their SF counterparts.

Historical inter-service rivalries would inevitably emerge; however, service parochialism should not be allowed to prevent JSOF units from working for the greater good of USSOCOM. USSOCOM's establishment and enforcement of strict selection, assessment, training, and employment standards common to all FID/ UW operators would certainly mitigate inter-service tensions.

While these proposed organizational solutions may prove fruitful, USSOCOM will also need to focus additional efforts on recruiting, training, and employing the right personnel for the Long War. USSOCOM's Capstone Concept for Special Operations 2006 clearly articulated that:

The envisioned Joint SOF Warrior of the Future will be far more *diverse in capability, education, training, ethnicity, age, and other characteristics*. The Joint SOF Warrior will be proficient in interagency and international relationships and increasingly capable of operating for extended periods of time in diverse regions of the world.<sup>36</sup>

In order to accomplish this aim, USSOCOM must continue to reevaluate the manner in which it selects, trains, employs, and retains its personnel. USSOCOM's current efforts to improve its personnel policies are commendable. Noteworthy accomplishments

include the establishment of a JSOF human capital development program. USSOCOM's JSOF fledging "cradle to grave" career management system emphasizing selected educational, overseas, and exchange or liaison operational programs should also be fully supported. "Joint SOF Warriors, whether on active duty, in the Reserve components, or retired, represent a strategic national asset, and their careers must be closely managed to ensure long-term benefits for JSOF."<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, USSOCOM should reward specialization over generalization. Regional expertise takes years to develop. Current manpower policies that obligate individuals to change billets every few years must be curtailed. Additionally, JSOF FID/UW operators should be allowed to focus exclusively on these missions. Currently, Army SF are expected to carry out both direct and indirect missions with equal proficiency- a nearly impossible task. FID/UW missions require a full-time commitment.

*USSOCOM should acknowledge the inherent limitations of the current Army SF ODA structure in regards to FID/UW.* An ODA that specializes in FID/UW will probably look much different in the future. Mission parameters and regional realities will very likely dictate team composition. Team members might even include (temporarily or at least in a supporting role), for example, sociologists, academics, artists, political scientists, economists, elderly "statesmen," women of various ages and ethnicities, information technicians, propagandists, and foreigners recruited from the local area. Tomorrow's ODAs will need to incorporate a more flexible modular structure that can be modified and expanded as necessary to meet mission demands.

Nonetheless, future ODAs and other indirect mission units must never lose their organic offensive and defensive capability. They must retain their capacity to intimidate



and kill if necessary. The versatile nature of multi-faceted JSOF, who can both persuade and fight with equal competence, will ensure that they are respected by their foreign counterparts and feared by their enemies.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, progressive ideas to incorporate new types of personnel within ODAs should be tempered by the operational reality that these same individuals must be capable and willing to execute traditional warrior skills as well.

Personnel policies should be modified in order to provide incentives for FID/UW experts to remain in uniform. For example, current limitations on E-8 and E-9s within all USSOCOM units should be lifted, considering it takes decades to train these individuals. Operators in their 40s certainly make the most significant contributions in the indirect fight due to their maturity and broader experience. Policies must be adopted to allow senior enlisted SF personnel to remain with their ODAs. Any degradation in their physical abilities is only of secondary concern, since UW and FID missions generally emphasize intellectual over physical prowess.

These invaluable veterans must likewise be encouraged to remain in uniform through substantial reenlistment bonuses and gratifying operational opportunities. USSOCOM should work with the DOD and Congress to stem the exodus of JSOF veterans who leave for lucrative jobs with private security firms that are ironically (and some contend perversely) paid by the same government that invested hundreds of thousands of dollars training the same JSOF who now fill their employee ranks.

The keys to retention are clear: worthy missions, career growth opportunities, command and peer support, adequate monetary compensation, stability for families, and a reasonable operational tempo.<sup>39</sup> Small bonuses should be offered to JSOF after

retirement to encourage them to maintain their physical fitness. JSOF staff-non-commissioned officers (SNCOs), in particular, should be offered meaningful DOD-related jobs after they retire.

USSOCOM must also radically *expand its potential candidate pool*. A thorough examination of the means by which JSOF can become more diverse in order to better mirror the host populations in future operational areas is critical.<sup>40</sup> USSOCOM needs to reevaluate, and modify as necessary, current selection and assessment processes in order to broaden the range of people joining JSOF. Considering the fact that FID/UW require special skill sets, different selection processes and evaluation criteria for individuals who are expected to participate in these missions may be necessary.

Programs must be developed to incorporate the skills of JSOF “drop outs.” Currently, the majority of individuals who fail rigorous JSOF assessments are returned to their parent commands. The loss of this human capital should be avoided. Many of these highly-motivated individuals could be selected and trained to become “JSOF enablers,” who could in turn provide vital logistical and administrative support to JSOF. USSOCOM should consider the creation, promotion, and maintenance of three distinct JSOF career paths for operators, leaders/ managers, and JSOF support personnel.<sup>41</sup>

Imaginative solutions to current and projected future manpower shortages must be sought as well. While innovative initiatives such as the U.S. Army’s 18 X-Ray program, a manpower plan that recruits civilians for follow-on SF assessment, training, and assignment, should be continued, it is clear that they cannot fulfill expanding manning requirements. It also unclear whether the targeting of potential recruits amongst immigrant populations within the U.S. will satisfy current manpower shortfalls.

***Overcoming the Challenges of Diversity: Foreign Recruitment?***

“When Rome went out and hired mercenary soldiers, Rome fell.”  
-President Dwight Eisenhower.

The 2007 edition of “Flashpoints” produced by the Marine Corps’ Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities (CETO) evaluated numerous nations based on their potential to experience future conflict. When considering the top 20 most at risk nations, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) regions are clearly the most troublesome. Afghanistan and Haiti were the only exceptions to this finding.

Many nations in these regions are extremely poor, lack effective governance, have major health problems and are plagued by high rates of crime and corruption. Additionally, their proclivity to discriminate against women (especially Muslim states), including the failure to provide girls/women with equal educational opportunities, results in these nations failing to take full advantage the potential contributions of half their populations.<sup>42</sup>

Regrettably, JSOF currently possesses too few individuals who benefit from an intimate understanding of the languages and cultures of these potential flashpoints. “It takes at least 2 to 3 years to develop a person with the necessary level of proficiency in a language, and up to 5 years for someone to obtain a certain knowledge level of these target regions.”<sup>43</sup> Considering current operational tempos and competing requirements placed upon JSOF personnel, it is unreasonable to anticipate that native-born JSOF will develop these necessary skills for indirect missions.

Aggressive efforts to recruit JSOF candidates from within the diasporas of immigrant communities in the U.S. have failed to meet expectations thus far. These efforts need to be reexamined and reinforced. Qualified individuals from select

immigrant populations are potentially the best candidates for JSOF indirect missions since they are already familiar with both American and their own foreign cultures.

Ultimately, *it is clear that foreign recruitment will still have to play a significant role in filling shortfalls in personnel and capacity.* Certainly, generous cash incentives will encourage many foreigners to consider JSOF as a career. Nonetheless, other incentives such as guarantees of citizenship for operatives and their relatives in exchange for honorable service will prove more enticing. The respectful treatment of potential, foreign recruits and operators will also pay enormous dividends as their compatriots will be encouraged to join JSOF. Most importantly, the key will be to offer foreign JSOF candidates the opportunity of inclusion into American society. Immigrants have historically proven to be some of the most loyal and dedicated American soldiers on account of their desire to prove their patriotism.

Currently, Pentagon policy stipulates that only immigrants legally residing in the United States and its territories are eligible to enlist. There are currently about 30,000 non-citizens who serve in the U.S. armed forces, making up less than two percent of the active-duty force.<sup>44</sup> Recent changes in U.S. law, however, have granted the Pentagon authority to bring immigrants to the United States if it determines their recruitment is vital to national security. So far, the Pentagon has not taken full advantage of this opportunity. Since September 2001 the number of immigrants in uniform who have become U.S. citizens has only increased from 750 in 2001 to approximately 4,600 in 2005.<sup>45</sup>

The U.S. Army has had a long history of recruiting and employing indigenous and foreign troops. For example, foreigners comprised a significant portion of Union and

Confederate forces in the Civil War. Indian scouts were also widely used in the frontier wars. The Lodge-Philbin Act, which passed on 30 June 1950 and allowed for the recruitment of foreign nationals, serves as another significant case in point. The act sanctioned the enlistment of 2,500 male aliens in the U.S. Army and granted them U.S. citizenship in return for five years of honorable military service. The act helped to harness the language and cultural skills of displaced Europeans in the Cold War against the Soviet Union.<sup>46</sup> Between 30 June 1950 and the end of the Lodge Act program in 1959, 1,969 foreign-born soldiers enlisted under its provisions.<sup>47</sup> The implementation of a revised Lodge Act for the twenty-first century should be considered.

Obviously, there are many potential pitfalls to foreign recruitment. Many critics will naturally be concerned that lucrative foreign recruitment incentives may attract “human right abusers and mercenaries, or even members of terrorist groups bent on creating sleeper cells in the military.”<sup>48</sup> However, these risks can be mitigated through extensive initial physical and psychological screenings. The recruitment methods of the French Foreign Legion, which have effectively created and maintained one of the most formidable military organizations in the world for over two centuries, should be examined and emulated as appropriate.

Restrictions on granting foreigners secret clearances will need to be lifted for select individuals as well. Without access to classified information, these individuals will not be able to operate or contribute effectively. Those with criminal pasts or former connections to insurgent or terrorist groups should not be automatically rejected either. In fact, these individuals could prove to be extremely valuable to USSOCOM, as they may possess insiders’ knowledge of how America’s opponents operate. Paragons of

virtue rarely possess an instinctive understanding of deception and the often devious, asymmetric methods used by adversaries. Even if most of these individuals with “colorful” pasts prove unqualified to join JSOF, many of them could still be closely monitored, controlled, and employed as informants and auxiliaries.

Ultimately, the U.S. military will have to assume measured risks in accepting more foreigners within its ranks. These risks are warranted when weighed against the potential payoffs of increasing the military’s ability to employ diverse individuals who possess the cultural knowledge and language expertise required for FID/ UW operations in projected hotspots. While many foreign applicants’ motives for initially joining may be somewhat mercenary, the character of their service does not have to remain so.<sup>49</sup> With dignified treatment and extensive acculturation, there is no reason why most of these individuals will not become valuable soldiers and loyal U.S. citizens.

## *Conclusion*

### *SOF Truths*

- Humans are more important than hardware.
- Quality is better than quantity.
- Special operations forces cannot be massed produced.
- Competent special operations forces cannot be created after emergencies occur.<sup>50</sup>

Substantial resistance to any of these recommended changes will be inevitable. In particular, it can be anticipated that many will refuse to lessen current, accepted standards in order to broaden the JSOF pool. Critics will assert that any dilution in the quality of JSOF and diminishment in its “hard” warrior skills will undermine USSOCOM’s credibility. Such arguments, nevertheless, do not acknowledge the most important skill sets needed for JSOF in the Long War. Existing selection processes that overemphasize physical prowess over unique ethnic, psychological, and intellectual skills have resulted in a force that is far too homogenous and young, and thus too focused on direct approaches instead of the far more nuanced and challenging, but often more effective, indirect ones.

It is readily apparent that, “the strengthening of local forces is the best way of salvaging Iraq and Afghanistan, and may help avoid the need for future interventions” in other projected hotspots of the world.<sup>51</sup> If we acknowledge that this premise is indeed correct, then we must accept that JSOF, as it is currently comprised, is limited in its ability to develop the cultural expertise or achieve the broad acceptance necessary to gain the confidence and acceptance of many foreigners. The assertion, for instance, that a predominantly young, white, and all-male ODA, with only rudimentary language and

cultural skills, will consistently be able to establish long-term, meaningful relationships with dissimilar proxies remains dubious.

Moreover, efforts to incorporate foreign-born individuals within JSOF will sound a clarion of alarm for many who fatalistically predict that aggressive foreign recruitment will further encourage the already prevalent tendency to abrogate native-borne, patriotic responsibilities. The U.S. military certainly runs the risk of undermining the American ideals of civic responsibility if it decides to *outsource entirely* its military responsibilities to foreigners. This is highly improbable. Even so, one could make a strong argument that with the creation and widespread acceptance of an all-volunteer military force, the U.S. has already weakened the American “narrative” of the citizen-soldier. Without conscription, fewer American youths from the lowest and highest social classes now consider serving in the military. In essence, the American citizenry has already outsourced its military responsibilities to the lower-middle class.

The U.S. military’s ability to understand its enemies in the Long War will remain somewhat limited unless it employs personnel who possess an intimate knowledge of adversaries’ languages and customs. While the recruitment of first and second-generation immigrants who match target populations abroad should be a first priority, the reality remains that U.S. military will never be able to recruit enough of these select individuals to meet forecasted demands. Hence, foreign recruitment remains the most viable option. Regardless of Americans’ natural hesitancy to “contract” foreigners, overseas JSOF recruitment does not contradict historical precedence. The U.S. still remains a polyglot nation in which immigrants have historically, and will continue, to provide invaluable contributions that strengthen its national tapestry. America’s



persistence in maintaining the historically inaccurate mythology of fielding armed forces manned solely by native citizen-soldiers is counter-productive.

In the final analysis, there is clearly a need to establish a long-term balance between USSOCOM's direct and indirect missions. USSOCOM's future success will require fundamental changes in its attitude, approach, and organization. USSOCOM must exercise patience and emphasize indirect approaches that work in concert with the rest of the DOD, other agencies, and American allies to address underlying conditions that foster global terrorism and insurgencies. It is paramount that USSOCOM continues *to develop, train, employ, and retain highly dedicated men and women who possess the requisite language skills, cross-cultural training, regional expertise, and political understanding requisite to excel in the Long War's intrinsic complexity.*

***Appendix: A- USSOCOM's Principal Direct and Indirect Missions Definitions*****Definitions of Direct Missions:**

**Counterterrorism:** (DOD) Operations that include the offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, preempt, and respond to terrorism. Also called CT. See also antiterrorism; combating terrorism; terrorism.

**Counterproliferation:** (DOD) Those actions (e.g., detect and monitor, prepare to conduct counterproliferation operations, offensive operations, weapons of mass destruction, active defense, and passive defense) taken to defeat the threat and/or use of weapons of mass destruction against the United States, our military forces, friends, and allies. Also called CP. See also non-proliferation.

**Direct Action:** (DOD) Short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and which employ specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets. Direct action differs from conventional offensive actions in the level of physical and political risk, operational techniques, and the degree of discriminate and precise use of force to achieve specific objectives. Also called DA. See also special operations; special operations forces.

**Special Reconnaissance:** (DOD) Reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, employing military capabilities not normally found in conventional forces. These actions provide an additive capability for commanders and supplement other conventional reconnaissance and surveillance actions. Also called SR.

**Information Operations:** (DOD) The integrated employment of the core capabilities of electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations, military deception, and operations security, in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own. Also called IO.

**Definitions of Indirect Missions:**

**Unconventional Warfare:** (DOD) A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes, but is not limited to, guerrilla warfare, subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and unconventional assisted recovery. Also called UW.

**Psychological Operations:** (DOD) Planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective

reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives. Also called PSYOP. See also overt peacetime psychological operations programs; perception management.

**Foreign Internal Defense:** (DOD) Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. Also called FID.

**Civil Affairs:** (DOD) Designated Active and Reserve component forces and units organized, trained, and equipped specifically to conduct civil affairs activities and to support civil-military operations. Also called CA. See also civil affairs activities; civil-military operations.

The DOD Dictionary and the Joint Acronyms and Abbreviations master data base are managed by the Joint Doctrine Division, J-7, Joint Staff. All approved joint definitions are contained in Joint Publication 1-02, "DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms. As amended through 04 March 2008.

All of these definitions can be found at <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/>.

## ***Appendix B: Additional USSOCOM/ JSOF- Related Definitions***

**Air Force Special Operations Forces:** (DOD) Those Active and Reserve Component Air Force forces designated by the Secretary of Defense that are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. Also called AFSOF.

**Army Special Operations Forces:** (DOD) Those Active and Reserve Component Army forces designated by the Secretary of Defense that are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. Also called ARSOF.

**Civil Affairs Activities:** (DOD) Activities performed or supported by civil affairs that (1) enhance the relationship between military forces and civil authorities in areas where military forces are present; and (2) involve application of civil affairs functional specialty skills, in areas normally the responsibility of civil government, to enhance conduct of civil-military operations. See also civil affairs; civil-military operations.

**Civil-Military Operations:** (DOD) The activities of a commander that establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces, governmental and nongovernmental civilian organizations and authorities, and the civilian populace in a friendly, neutral, or hostile operational area in order to facilitate military operations, to consolidate and achieve operational US objectives. Civil-military operations may include performance by military forces of activities and functions normally the responsibility of the local, regional, or national government. These activities may occur prior to, during, or subsequent to other military actions. They may also occur, if directed, in the absence of other military operations. Civil-military operations may be performed by designated civil affairs, by other military forces, or by a combination of civil affairs and other forces. Also called CMO. See also civil affairs; operation.

**Conventional Forces:** (DOD) 1. Those forces capable of conducting operations using non-nuclear weapons. 2. Those forces other than designated special operations forces.

**Clandestine Operation:** (DOD) An operation sponsored or conducted by governmental departments or agencies in such a way as to assure secrecy or concealment. A clandestine operation differs from a covert operation in that emphasis is placed on concealment of the operation rather than on concealment of the identity of the sponsor. In special operations, an activity may be both covert and clandestine and may focus equally on operational considerations and intelligence-related activities. See also covert operation; overt operation.

**Covert Operation:** (DOD) An operation that is so planned and executed as to conceal the identity of or permit plausible denial by the sponsor. A covert operation differs from a clandestine operation in that emphasis is placed on concealment of the identity of the sponsor rather than on concealment of the operation. See also clandestine operation; overt operation.

**Counterinsurgency:** (DOD) Those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency. Also called COIN.

**Denied Area:** (DOD) An area under enemy or unfriendly control in which friendly forces cannot expect to operate successfully within existing operational constraints and force capabilities.

**In Extremis:** (DOD) A situation of such exceptional urgency that immediate action must be taken to minimize imminent loss of life or catastrophic degradation of the political or military situation.

**Information:** (DOD) 1. Facts, data, or instructions in any medium or form. 2. The meaning that a human assigns to data by means of the known conventions used in their representation.

**Insurgency:** (DOD, NATO) An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict.

**Intelligence:** (DOD) The product resulting from the collection, processing, integration, evaluation, analysis, and interpretation of available information concerning foreign nations, hostile or potentially hostile forces or elements, or areas of actual or potential operations. The term is also applied to the activity which results in the product and to the organizations engaged in such activity.

**Irregular Warfare:** (DOD) A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence, and will. Also called IW.

**Lead Agency:** (DOD) Designated among US Government agencies to coordinate the interagency oversight of the day-to-day conduct of an ongoing operation. The lead agency is to chair the interagency working group established to coordinate policy related to a particular operation. The lead agency determines the agenda, ensures cohesion among the agencies, and is responsible for implementing decisions.

**Marine Corps Special Operations Forces:** (DOD) Those Active Component Marine Corps forces designated by the Secretary of Defense that are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. Also called MARSOF.

**Overt Operation:** (DOD) An operation conducted openly, without concealment. See also clandestine operation; covert operation.

**Overt Peacetime Psychological Operations Programs:** (DOD) Those programs developed by combatant commands, in coordination with the chiefs of US diplomatic missions, that plan, support, and provide for the conduct of psychological operations,

during military operations other than war, in support of US regional objectives, policies, interests, and theater military missions. Also called OP3. See also psychological operations.

**Naval Special Warfare:** (DOD) A designated naval warfare specialty that conducts operations in the coastal, riverine, and maritime environments. Naval special warfare emphasizes small, flexible, mobile units operating under, on, and from the sea. These operations are characterized by stealth, speed, and precise, violent application of force. Also called NSW.

**Naval Special Warfare Forces:** (DOD) Those Active and Reserve Component Navy forces designated by the Secretary of Defense that are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. Also called NSW forces or NAVSOF.

**Nonproliferation:** (DOD) Those actions (e.g., diplomacy, arms control, multilateral agreements, threat reduction assistance, and export controls) taken to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by dissuading or impeding access to, or distribution of, sensitive technologies, material, and expertise. Also called NP. See also counterproliferation.

**Rangers:** (DOD) Rapidly deployable airborne light infantry organized and trained to conduct highly complex joint direct action operations in coordination with or in support of other special operations units of all Services. Rangers also can execute direct action operations in support of conventional non-special operations missions conducted by a combatant commander and can operate as conventional light infantry when properly augmented with other elements of combined arms.

**Special Actions:** (DOD) Those functions that due to particular sensitivities, compartmentation, or caveats cannot be conducted in normal staff channels and therefore require extraordinary processes and procedures and may involve the use of sensitive capabilities.

**Special Activities:** (DOD) Activities conducted in support of national foreign policy objectives that are planned and executed so that the role of the US Government is not apparent or acknowledged publicly. They are also functions in support of such activities but are not intended to influence US political processes, public opinion, policies, or media and do not include diplomatic activities or the collection and production of intelligence or related support functions.

**Special Forces:** (DOD) US Army forces organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations with an emphasis on unconventional warfare capabilities. Also called SF.

**Special Forces Group:** (DOD) A combat arms organization capable of planning, conducting, and supporting special operations activities in all operational environments in

peace, conflict, and war. It consists of a group headquarters and headquarters company, a support company, and special forces battalions. The group can operate as a single unit, but normally the battalions plan and conduct operations from widely separated locations. The group provides general operational direction and synchronizes the activities of subordinate battalions. Although principally structured for unconventional warfare, special forces group units are capable of task-organizing to meet specific requirements. Also called SFG.

**Special Mission Unit:** (DOD) A generic term to represent a group of operations and support personnel from designated organizations that is task-organized to perform highly classified activities. Also called SMU.

**Special Operations:** (DOD) Operations conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional force requirement. These operations often require covert, clandestine, or low visibility capabilities. Special operations are applicable across the range of military operations. They can be conducted independently or in conjunction with operations of conventional forces or other government agencies and may include operations through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces. Special operations differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets. Also called SO.

**Special Operations Forces:** (DOD) Those Active and Reserve Component forces of the Military Services designated by the Secretary of Defense and specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations. Also called SOF. See also Air Force special operations forces; Army special operations forces; naval special warfare forces.

**Strategic Communication:** (DOD) Focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power.

**Strategic Intelligence:** (DOD) Intelligence required for the formation of policy and military plans at national and international levels. Strategic intelligence and tactical intelligence differ primarily in level of application, but may also vary in terms of scope and detail. See also intelligence; operational intelligence; tactical intelligence.

**Strike:** (DOD) An attack to damage or destroy an objective or a capability.

**Subversion:** (DOD) Action designed to undermine the military, economic, psychological, or political strength or morale of a regime. See also unconventional warfare.

**Subversive Activity:** (DOD) Anyone lending aid, comfort, and moral support to individuals, groups or organizations that advocate the overthrow of incumbent governments by force and violence is subversive and is engaged in subversive activity. All willful acts that are intended to be detrimental to the best interests of the government and that do not fall into the categories of treason, sedition, sabotage, or espionage will be placed in the category of subversive activity.

**Support to Counterinsurgency:** (DOD) Support provided to a government in the military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions it undertakes to defeat insurgency. See also support to insurgency.

**Support to Insurgency:** (DOD) Support provided to an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict. See also support to counterinsurgency.

**Synchronization:** (DOD) 1. The arrangement of military actions in time, space, and purpose to produce maximum relative combat power at a decisive place and time. 2. In the intelligence context, application of intelligence sources and methods in concert with the operation plan to ensure intelligence requirements are answered in time to influence the decisions they support.

The DOD Dictionary and the Joint Acronyms and Abbreviations master data base are managed by the Joint Doctrine Division, J-7, Joint Staff. All approved joint definitions are contained in Joint Publication 1-02, "DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms. As amended through 04 March 2008.

All of these definitions can be found at <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/>.



### ***Appendix C: USSOCOM's Principal Direct and Indirect Missions Comparison***

The following chart is copied from Lamb and Tucker's book, United States Special Operations Forces, p. 153. It divides USSOCOM's principal missions between indirect and direct ones. Direct missions can be classified as those in which JSOF operate directly against enemy targets themselves, while in indirect ones, JSOF exert their influence via indigenous forces and host nation populations.

<b><u>Direct</u></b>	<b><u>Indirect</u></b>
Counterterrorism	Unconventional Warfare
Counterproliferation	Psychological Operations
Direct Action	Foreign Internal Defense
Special Reconnaissance	Civil Affairs
Information Operations	

Lamb and Tucker highlight that,

The general categorization of JSOF missions as direct or indirect is not perfect; it is merely useful. USSOCOM acknowledges, for example, that unconventional warfare is 'predominantly conducted by, with, or through indigenous or surrogate forces,' a tacit acknowledgement that U.S. forces might themselves carry out guerrilla warfare. Similarly, some would observe that JSOF can pursue counter-terrorism indirectly by training and supervising foreign forces. Even so, the categorization of JSOF missions as direct and indirect is useful since it underscores the diverse commando and warrior-diplomatic skills that JSOF must have in order to perform well, and the fact that JSOF must specialize between the two to some extent.<sup>52</sup>

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## *Notes*

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<sup>1</sup> “Brains, Not Bullets: How to Fight Future Wars.” The Economist, 27 October – 2 November 2007, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Carafano, James. “The Long War against Terrorism.” The Heritage Foundation. [www.heritage.org](http://www.heritage.org). 8 September 2003. Carafano is recognized as one of the first individuals who used the term “The Long War.” Although the term is considered by many to be an imperfect definition because it fails to capture fully the extremely complex nature of America’s current, disparate conflicts throughout the world, the term remains widely used within the DOD, U.S. government, and popular lexicon. Its primary value lies in its emphasis on the prolonged nature of these conflicts. Unlike conventional warfare, which usually terminates in agreed-upon end states between warring nation-states, the “Long War,” which often encompasses many non-state actors as well as nation-states, does not offer the same promise of discernible end states.

<sup>3</sup> USSOCOM, Introduction to USSOCOM. MacDill Air Force Base, FL: U.S. Government Print Plant, 13 April 2006, 2. USSOCOM is a unique organization within the DOD since it combines the usual duties of an operational command with the responsibilities of a service command. That is to say that it employs forces as well as trains and equips them.

<sup>4</sup> Lamb, Christopher J. and Tucker, David. United States Special Operations Forces. New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, 146. The authors extensively discuss the misemployment of JSOF in the Long War throughout their book. I found many of their arguments to be compelling, and hence I incorporated them into this work. Areas which are categorized as “hostile, denied, and politically sensitive” are traditionally the purview of special operations. (See definition of special operations in Appendix B.)

<sup>5</sup> Lamb and Tucker, United States Special Operations Forces, 68.

<sup>6</sup> Lamb and Tucker, United States Special Operations Forces, 68.

<sup>7</sup> Donnelly, “The Army We Need: We Can’t Fight the Long War with the Forces We Have,” 2.

<sup>8</sup> “The Army We Need.” New York Times Editorial, 19 November 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Donnelly, Tom. “The Army We Need: We Can’t Fight the Long War with the Forces We Have.” The Weekly Standard, 06 April 2007, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Van Creveld, Martin. “War and Technology.” Foreign Policy Research Institute, October 2007, Vol. 12, No. 25, 2.

<sup>11</sup> “Brains, Not Bullets: How to Fight Future Wars.” The Economist, 27 October – 2 November 2007, 15.

<sup>12</sup> “The Army We Need.” New York Times Editorial, 2 January 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Johnson, Wray R. “Terms of Art.” Unpublished Paper. January 2008. Johnson’s essay extensively explains the critical difference between terrorism as a *method* of action and as a *logic* of action. Since this paper remains unpublished, I can provide a copy of it to any reader who is interested.

<sup>14</sup> “Brains, Not Bullets: How to Fight Future Wars.” The Economist, 27 October – 2 November 2007, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Lamb and Tucker, United States Special Operations Forces, 67.

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<sup>16</sup> “Assessing U.S. Special Operations Command’s Missions and Roles.” Hearing of the Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee. Federal News Service. 29 June 2006, 18.

<sup>17</sup> Bowra, Kenneth R. “An Historical Study: The U.S. Army Vietnam Individual Training Group (UITG) Program, 1971-1973.” U.S. Army War College, 1991, 26.

<sup>18</sup> Baratto, David, et al. Special Operations Forces Human Capital Proponency (Draft). Institute for Defense Analyses, 31 August 2007, 34-35.

<sup>19</sup> Lamb and Tucker, United States Special Operations Forces, 68.

<sup>20</sup> Lamb and Tucker, United States Special Operations Forces, 156.

<sup>21</sup> Robinson, Linda. “Men on a Mission: U.S. Special Forces Are Retooling for the War on Terror. Here’s their Plan.” U.S. News and World Report. 11 September 2006, 36-39.

<sup>22</sup> Robinson, U.S. News and World Report, 36.

<sup>23</sup> Robinson, U.S. News and World Report, 36.

<sup>24</sup> USSOCOM, *U.S. Special Operations Forces Posture Statement, 2006*. MacDill Air Force Base, FL, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Feickert, Andrew. “U.S. Special Operations (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress.” CRS Report for Congress, 6 March 2007, 1.

<sup>26</sup> Feickert, Andrew. CRS Report for Congress, 6.

<sup>27</sup> Hansen, Louis. “Navy SEALs get a Tough Mission: Recruitment.” Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, 7 May 07, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Hansen, Norfolk-Virginian Pilot, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Harrell, Margaret C., Kirby, Sheila Nataraj, Sloan, Jennifer S., Minority Representation in Special Operations Forces. RAND National Defense Research Institute, 1998, 7.

<sup>30</sup> Harrell, Minority Representation in Special Operations Forces, 11-13. The number of Black JSOF candidates in particular is disproportionately affected and reduced by Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) requirements and entrance swim tests.

<sup>31</sup> Lamb and Tucker, United States Special Operations Forces, 42.

<sup>32</sup> Couch, Dick. Chosen Soldier: The Making of a Special Forces Warrior. New York, New York: Crown Publishers, 2007, 132.

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<sup>34</sup> Lamb and Tucker, United States Special Operations Forces, 60.

<sup>35</sup> Lamb and Tucker, United States Special Operations Forces, 88.

<sup>36</sup> USSOCOM, *Capstone Concept for Special Operations, 2006*. MacDill Air Force Base, FL: US Government Print Plant, FL, 17 February 2006, 14.

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- <sup>37</sup> USSOCOM, *Capstone Concept for Special Operations*, 2006, 15.
- <sup>38</sup> Lamb and Tucker, United States Special Operations Forces, 150.
- <sup>39</sup> Joint Special Operations Warrior Initial Planning Team. “JSOW IPT and Group-A Notes.” Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 8-10 May, 2007.
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- <sup>42</sup> CETO, 45.
- <sup>43</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction. Language and Regional Expertise Planning. CJSCSI 3126.01, 2006, 7.
- <sup>44</sup> Bender, Bryan. “Military Considers Recruiting Foreigners: Expedited Citizenship Would be an Incentive.” The Boston Globe, 26 December 2006, 1.
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- <sup>48</sup> Schweizer, Peter. “Transforming U.S. Military into an American Foreign Legion.” Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 23 February 2003, 1.
- <sup>49</sup> Dagleish, A New Lodge Act for the U.S. Army: A Strategic Tool for the Global War on Terrorism, 20.
- <sup>50</sup> USSOCOM, *U.S. Special Operations Forces Fact Sheet 2007*. MacDill Air Force Base, FL.
- <sup>51</sup> “Brains, Not Bullets: How to Fight Future Wars.” The Economist, 27 October – 2 November 2007, 15.
- <sup>52</sup> Lamb and Tucker, United States Special Operations Forces, 154.